



## Importance of Collaboration Video Transcript

*Clip Length: 8 minutes, 3 seconds*

Narrator: Working very closely with The Duval County School Board, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and the City of Jacksonville, established a collaborative comprehensive truancy initiative in 1998. Since then, the collaborative has grown to include several key family and youth service organizations, including the Youth Crisis Center and has established strong relationships with faith and business community including shopping malls, BellSouth, and Burger King. This collaborative group is now known as Jacksonville United Against Truancy.

[Interview with Harry Shorestien, State Attorney, Duval County, FL]

It is critically important that we have not only the government agencies involved, but of course the state attorney, Law enforcement, school board, but to also bring the religious community in. We believe that the religious community as well as the welfare agencies addressing children's issues have to work together in order to be successful in the war against truancy.

An important result of the strong collaboration in Jacksonville has been the ability admitting different agencies to share information about individual students. Jacksonville has developed a strong data system that enables for the tracking of youth across, schools, courts, juvenile services, and law enforcement agencies. This data system has also enabled the city to measure the impact of its program. The results have been dramatic. In 2001, more than 75% of school truants increased their attendance. The recidivism rate for repeated truancy was reduced from 19% in 1999 to a little over 8% in 2001. The number of truants wanted from crimes or probation violations decreased 50% from 1999 to 2001. And the arrests of juveniles for residential burglary dropped 45.5% since the inception of the program.

[Interview with Asst. Chief Michael Rutledge]

The big thing is daytime burglary. It starts from there and actually it begins with misbehavior in the class room: being disruptive and it sometimes leads to suspensions and from there they just are at home and they are unsupervised. If you see them on the street and you catch them you have a better chance to prevent daytime burglaries and/or other types of crime.

[Interview with Eugene Heath]

Collaboration is percentage-wise at least 70% of this. We have the services, we have the mechanism but without the community collaboration we would not be able to do what we are doing.

[Interview with Donna Massie-Cobb, Duval County Public Schools]

Our partnership is important, the collaboration enables us to eliminate barriers for students regarding truancy. We have 164 schools 129,000 students, there is no way we can provide services to that number of students without our partners.

Narrator: In Houston, the initiative coordinated through the Mayor Anti-Gang Office works brings together school officials, law enforcement officers and the community-at-large to target truancy. The police department has utilizes a community oriented policing approach and officers are assigned to work in specific neighborhoods. The community police officers are based in storefronts offices in those

neighborhoods and spend much of their time in direct contact with families and youth living in the community.

The school-based case manager and community police officer collaborate to identify students with a pattern of absenteeism and to intervene early. They find the early intervention to be a more effective method of dealing with truancy than enforcing daytime curfews or waiting for chronic truants to become involved in more serious anti-social behavior.

[Interview with Adrian Garcia, Director, Mayor's Anti-Gang Office, Houston, TX]

So we found that providing a specific response to truancy within a unique community such as this, with all the partners that we have in place, we have found that we have made a tremendous impact.

Narrator: Critical to the success of the program is the sharing of information between schools, the case manager, and the police officers. It is important that officials who intervene with families and students have a complete picture of the student's performance, including attendance, disciplinary record and academic performance. In addition, collaboration with other agencies, including social services can ensure that students and families can access needed services in a timely manner.

[Interview with Cenaiyda Carranza, Case Manager, TRDP]

There is already a collaboration between the schools set up with the truancy reduction project. And how I access that information: the school gives us access to something called the SASI system, which is the Student Assistance Student Information, basically its going to give us access, so what I do is I prepare the file, pull the student attendance records and also the general information that has the address and phone number so that the officers have that when they go out to the home.

Narrator: In 1999, officials in Rhode Island decided to hold truancy courts in local schools rather than the courthouse. This has resulted in additional services and resources for truant students and their families. In addition, a strong partnership has developed between schools and the family court.

[Interview with James D'Ambra, Principal, Oliver Hazard Middle School]

Because of the presence physically of the truancy court, as sort of what I describe as the lynch pin for the remaining collaborations that we have through the Department of Attorney General that supports through a criminal justice grant, our after school and my business partner, insurance company.

You take all those collaborations together with the availability and presence of the truancy court Partnerships therefore then become all the more successful. So without the truancy court, in my opinion, might we have improved attendance? Yes. Would it have been to the degree that we have succeeded? Absolutely not.

[Interview with Patricia K. Asquith, Magistrate, Providence, Rhode Island]

I think the success of this truancy court is because the schools, the courts, and the parents working together. Its all three walking together to ensure the success of this truancy court. Our goal, and it's common a goal of the school, the parents, and the court, our goal is to ensure that every child graduates from high school.

Narrator: The partnership between the courts and schools in Rhode Island has resulted not only in better attendance rates, but also in improved academic performance and classroom behavior.

[More interview with Principal D'Ambra]

Just the fact that that increased number of youngsters is coming to school every day bodes well for the total academic performance of all the youngsters. Because if your not in school you can't learn.

[Interview with David Cicilline, Mayor, Providence, Rhode Island]

What the truancy court embodies is the importance of community collaborations solving both attendance issues and all the issues in the neighborhood. The truancy court brings together the court system, the

police, teachers, administrators, community members, parents, all working together in a very collaborative way to ensure our children are in school and performing well academically.

Narrator: In Suffolk County, New York, the County Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission decided to target truancy by placing juvenile probation officers in schools. The officers are able to intervene early before the problems become too severe and assist in the county's efforts to divert Persons In Need of Supervision cases from the Family Court.

[Interview with Vince Iaria, Director of Probation, Suffolk County, New York]

Having the probation officer here brings in a whole set of other resources that the probation department and the county have to deal with this problem.

Narrator: Both the schools and probation department have benefited; schools have fewer tardy and truant students and the caseloads of the probation department have decreased. In addition, officers have more frequent contact with youth on their caseload.

[Interview with Jim Zebrowski, Assistant Principal, Bellport Middle School]

I think anytime you have separate agencies working together I think a lot of problems may arise from the fact that there may not be a common goal. And everyone is working toward a different goal. Here our goal is to reduce truancy.

[END]



OJJDP

